

Addresses

. IN .

Holy Week.

BY

RIGHT REV.

A. F. W. INGRAM

BISHOP OF LONDON.

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HOLY WEEK IN ST. PAUL'S

1902

W.W.B.

ADDRESSES

GIVEN IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL
DURING HOLY WEEK, 1902

BY

ARTHUR FOLEY WINNINGTON-INGRAM

BISHOP OF LONDON

PUBLISHED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE TRACT COMMITTEE

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These Addresses were taken down in shorthand,
and are printed just as they were spoken, with
only a few grammatical corrections.—A. F. L.

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ADDRESSES

HOLY WEEK, 1902

MONDAY

"The Son of Man goeth, as it is written of Him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!"
—MARK xiv. 21.

WE gather again, my brothers and sisters, for another Holy Week and another Good Friday, and there are two things—so it seems to me—which are essential to make our gatherings together day by day fruitful in work upon our souls.

The first is a real belief in the Incarnation. If Jesus Christ was only a good man, we might derive still some benefit by gathering day by day for a short half-hour, and thinking together over the sayings and doings and the character of a good man; but if, as we believe, the person whom we watch in Holy Week was the Eternal

Son of God, then the whole idea of Holy Week is lifted on to a totally different level. I used to think as a young man that there was something almost unreal in year by year pretending, as some people put it to me, to believe that the whole great scene was happening over again; but if the Incarnation is true—in a perfectly true sense, it is happening over again. If it was the eternal Son of God who lay upon the Cross—then the Cross, instead of being lifted a few feet above the heads of men, stands above every generation with such an awful height that every generation sinks into insignificance before it—then the Cross judges us to-day, as with easy and terrible reach it gathers every generation under its shadow—then it is just as real for us who gather here at the beginning of the twentieth century—it has just the same message, both of comfort and of warning, that it had to those who lived when Jesus Christ was crucified. And therefore I would put it to you to-day—you, who, please God, will come and gather this week day by day—do you believe that it was the Son of God Himself whom we are to watch this week, and who died upon the Cross? If so, then there is no unreality, as we shall look at ourselves under the shadow of the Cross and in the light which it throws. So, again, if this

is true, there is no unreality in looking for Judas—in looking for Peter—in looking for the sleeping disciples among ourselves. In the presence of the dying—and my mind is full of one whom I saw but yesterday going so quietly and so calmly to her death—no man dare lie; and therefore in the presence of the dying I ask you men and women of this generation—those whom the Cross judges to-day—to look at yourselves, to see if it is not true that those disciples whom we shall take one by one this week, have not a living counterpart in the midst of us in the City of London to-day. If the sight we see as we pass from this world into another is Jesus Christ Himself with the marks of the Cross in His hands and in His feet—or as it were a lamb that had been slain, then it is no unreality, it is a living reality that we are brought back to, every Holy Week and Good Friday, and we must ask ourselves, “Have we a hand in the Cross ourselves?”

And, secondly—and what experiences one has had as a priest convinces one of this—nothing can be done without the power of the Holy Ghost. One can believe in the Holy Spirit in such a way as to be fanatical—some people would say, and think, that no preparation is needful for speaking, because “the Holy Ghost will give

you in that hour what ye ought to say." I believe that to be a misunderstanding of Holy Scripture; but of this fact one is certain, that however carefully you may think out what you have to say, the most carefully-prepared sermon has no effect whatever on a human soul, unless the Holy Ghost takes the words and stamps them Himself upon the heart and conscience of man. God grant the Holy Spirit this week may take of Christ's and show Him to us and convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

I take then to-day one of the most terrible verses in Holy Scripture—"The Son of Man goeth as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed." "He goeth as it is written of Him"—that is the awful part of it. "Ye have persecuted and killed the Just One, and He doth not resist you." Take the lad who perhaps is being bullied or persecuted for his religion in some great factory—you can do it—you have the terrible power of doing it, and he cannot resist you; but "woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed." The girl who is led away in this, in some respects, cruel City—you can do it—you have her in your power and she cannot resist you; but "woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed." And when I take Judas as I do to-day for our

short meditation, I would say at once that I put aside the difficult question of reconciling fore-ordination and free-will—I put aside the question which might take us much longer than twenty minutes to discuss, as to how it is that men do fulfil the plans of God, and yet have an entire free-will as they do it. But what I would seek at the beginning to do is to get rid of the idea that Judas was, as it were, a puppet in the hands of destiny, and that, chosen from the start as a bad man, he had to act his part in the great tragedy of Calvary. Now I believe for four reasons that if we think this we have made an entire misinterpretation of Holy Scripture, and we have lost one of the most searching lessons which could possibly be given to our own souls. I ask you thinking men here present—would Christ have chosen Judas as His disciple if he was wholly bad? No; we lose the significance of the lesson of Judas if we do not realize that Judas had his noble side. There was not much to be obtained, from a worldly point of view, in joining a hunted band of disciples as they went up and down Galilee—there must have been something noble in Judas to have made him throw in his lot with the disciples as they went homeless and houseless and almost penniless up and down Judæa. Secondly, there is not the

slightest reason to suppose but that Judas himself took part in spiritual work—the disciples went out; they preached in different villages the Gospel—and I know of no more searching thought to us who have to preach so much, as that Judas himself might have been a preacher and looked upon as a spiritual power in the world. So again, thirdly, you find that our Lord Jesus Christ was always appealing to the good side of Judas; He never gave him up even to the last; He kept giving him warnings, giving him hints, as we say, trying to appeal to the noble side of him, and even at the very last He said, “Friend, wherefore art thou come?” And fourthly, when we compare the dealings of God with men, we find that He could not possibly have dealt with Judas otherwise than He has dealt with other men; the history of human nature is the same in every generation, and you can be quite certain that in tracing the history of Judas we are tracing the history of a man who had, and displayed before the eyes of the world, a devolution of character, the devolution of which is the greatest lesson to ourselves.

What then—that comes to be the question—what was it that turned a man of probably naturally noble character, with aspirations which made him join a band of poor men standing for

the right—into the traitor Judas? And of all the books which I have read about the Passion, I believe one of the very truest to be a volume, now out of print, but which seems to place its finger with great accuracy upon the standing and central sin which led Judas astray.¹ The writer says as follows:—

“We should wonder,” he says, “perhaps the less if we only reflected what a blinding, hardening power, one fixed idea, one set purpose, one dominant passion in the full flush and fervour of its ascendancy exerts upon the human spirit, how it blinds to consequences that are staring us in the very face, how it deadens the remonstrances to which in other circumstances we should have at once yielded, how it carries us over obstacles that at other times would at once have stopped us; nay, more—and what perhaps is the most striking feature of the whole—how the very interferences for which otherwise we should have been grateful are resented, how the very appeals intended and fitted to arrest become as so many goads driving us the more determinedly down the path.” I believe the writer has put his finger upon what turned Judas into the traitor. It was the self-deception of one dominant idea, a dominant

¹ *The Last Day of Our Lord's Passion*, by the Reverend William Hanna.

idea that was fostered and increased by the very things which should have crushed it out of him in the discipline of his character. He was an able man, but, with that business ability which distinguished Judas, he had what so often goes with it—a love of power and a love of money. Being made the treasurer of the little band, one would have thought that the very pitifulness of the small amount which he had to treasure would have curbed his dreams of avarice—it would have seemed to him a shame that he had so little in charge, and such self-sacrificing companions in his life, to have indulged in dreams of avarice. But no—like an office-boy or bank-clerk, who gambles for a small sum, and then is stimulated by the desire to get money on a great scale to gamble for a larger sum, it became a dominant idea in the mind of Judas to become the treasurer of a great kingdom, and as the idea grew with him, so the impatience became greater with the ways of his Master. No doubt he, in a way, loved his Master—no doubt there must have been something to the last of that passionate love which first drew him to throw in his lot with Him. But Judas must have argued something like this in his mind:—“These poor, unworldly men—it is fortunate they have a business head among them; it is fortunate that there is

somebody here who can gauge an opportunity, and who can see where an advantage can be had. They will be glad some day, even if they misjudge me now, when I am chancellor of the great kingdom, and I have forced the Master to be a king, which He can be if He likes. These powers of working miracles, this influence over people—why, it is throwing chances away! He can be king if He likes.” And so Judas with this dominant idea in his mind growing every day, that he would force the kingdom on, that the Passover was such a grand time, when so many people were there—he blinded himself at last to every scruple. Conscience said time after time:—“Judas, what are you doing? are you really aiming for the Master, or aiming for yourself? Judas, is it right, this betrayal? Is it right to be thinking of gold when those men here are thinking nothing of themselves at all?” But blinded, dominated by this one idea, Judas went blindly on, and when he pressed the fatal kiss upon his Master, probably to the very last he thought he was doing it for His good, and it was not until the lightning flash came at last when his Master was really taken, when the Son of Man was really betrayed, when He was led away and did nothing for His rescue—then the lightning flash showed Judas where he was, the veil slipped from his

eyes, conscience had its revenge, and he departed and went and hanged himself.

What then I put to you to-day, is this—and I put it to myself—can there be at this moment some terrible self-deception which may be blinding our eyes, and leading us on almost against our own knowledge to betray our Lord? I can imagine how some of you who work in the City find it a difficult task sometimes to keep perfectly straight in business. I can imagine how often there is a conflict goes on. “Shall I take this great chance?” It may not seem quite straight; it is what you call ‘sailing near the wind,’ but still it is a great chance. “I may get by it money by which I shall be able to do much good in the world.” Conscience speaks as loud as it can; but the dominant idea, the prevailing desire, grows on the man so terribly that it can turn nobility into treachery; the love of money, which is a root of all evil, may it not be at this moment corroding what is good in you, and leading you in the City in what you do, either in a small way or controlling great operations, to crucify the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame?

So again, what self-deception is there about what is called friendship. What mischievous relations has the word “friend” covered before

now! And yet men, aye, and women too, will deceive themselves up to the last under it.

“Love comforteth like sunshine after rain;

But lust's effect is tempest after sun.

Love's gentle spring doth always fresh remain;

Lust's winter comes ere summer half is done.”

Are you at this moment, under a veil of what you call friendship, injuring your soul and the soul of another? It is extraordinary—I have seen it this past week—how a man has gone on with a veil over his eyes trying to believe that he was doing good to some one, while all the time he was working the most damnable mischief upon that soul. I do plead with you as to whether you may not at this moment be involved in some intimacy which is checking the life of your soul and the soul of another. “If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee; it is better to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.”

So again with our churchmanship, or our religion. The Inquisition was not the only terrible work which was done in the name of religion; and it is too terrible to see how men to-day, in the desire to push their church or their organization, or to be keen perhaps in getting the party to which they belong advanced in its interest, will trample under foot by sheer

self-deception the primary elements of honour and of honesty.

So again, lastly, whom are you working for really in your religious life? One has seen sometimes leading laymen and women, too, giving themselves to work, but who are not giving themselves to the Master in the work; who in their spiritual work, their Sunday school work, their work as churchwardens, sidesmen, or as deacons in chapels, are advancing themselves, serving themselves, not serving the humble and lowly Master, and are deceived all the time by their very work. I put it to you then on this first day together, as we look at the Cross, and as we see the hand there of Judas, in the Cross; as we see him go up in his self-deceived way and kiss his Master with the traitor's kiss:—"Am I in any sense a traitor? God tear, this first day of Holy Week, the veil of self-deception from my eyes, and let me go down on my knees and say, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'"

TUESDAY

“Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man.”—MATT. xxvi. 74.

At first we are absolutely astonished. Who is it who says this? Can this be the man whose heart was won so long ago by Jesus Christ? Can this be the one who in his impulsive love came to Him at the risk of his life across the water? Can this be the one who said, “Though I should die with Thee I will never deny Thee in any wise”? Nay—can this be the brave disciple who was not going to see his Master taken without a blow, and took up a sword to defend him against a hundred? We know that it is Peter, and it is easy enough to say it was moral cowardice that did it; for the brave Apostle to be turned to such a denial by the laugh of a girl is indeed a spectacle for men and angels to weep over. And in looking at St. Peter’s fall, for God’s sake let us look at it with respectful sympathy. There is not one of us but who must look at St. Peter’s fall, feeling that St.

Peter was ten times the man he is. As the old hymn says :

“How oft his cowardice of heart
We have, without his love sincere—
The sin without the sorrow’s smart,
The shame without the tear !”

But when with respectful sympathy we look into the secret of his moral cowardice, we find there was a tendency to boast evident in the disciple’s character before this. We cannot forget that our Lord, immediately He had said, “Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church”—meaning, not St. Peter, but the body He had gathered round Him, who had confessed the truth, and on whom He could at last build His Church—said also, “Get thee behind Me, Satan ; thou art an offence to Me.” We can see a tendency to self-assertion. It is a dangerous thing to be a leader of men, and St. Peter, pushed forward as a leader, had this tendency to self-assertion developed, which partly led to his fall ; and, then, there was that fear of public opinion which has misled thousands since then, that self-consciousness which is a form of vanity, and is really other people’s consciousness. How miserable it is—we see it often now—to see some strong man who would go up and face a battery in the

cause of his country, do the most cowardly thing out of fear of a sneer.

But while we mark the great Apostle's fall, let us recall the wonderful history of his restoration. "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter," and that look by its offended love produced what offended love alone can produce, and that is contrition. There may be some this Lent who have been trying to attain to penitence and contrition. They have listened to the threatenings of the Law; they have tried to get themselves into a feeling of penitence for their sins—but they may have neglected the one thing that will make them contrite; they have neglected to look towards Jesus Christ that He may look into their hearts. "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter," and it was the first thing which showed him what he had done. Then, secondly, followed the time of probation, which leaves the penitence to rankle. So many people in dealing with the discipline of souls, and in bearing their own discipline, forget that the penitence must work in the soul. Have you ever thought what an awful Good Friday St. Peter spent when he had gone out and wept bitterly? If any here have ever stood by the grave-side of their mother, whom by their neglect they may have hurried into an early grave, and known what it is

to know that not all the love in the world can reach that mother now, or undo what they have done, they will have some idea of what St. Peter felt during the whole of Good Friday. Then came the blessed restoration in person. First the message—"Go tell the disciples, and Peter"—a special message. Then He appeared in a secret personal way, too sacred to be described, to Simon, we are told. And then, lastly—a sight which must be encouragement unto that young man who sometimes says, "Bishop, can I dare after such a denial ever to hope to be ordained?" "Or can I hope," says the poor woman who knows that she has done wrong in the past, "can I hope ever to be of use in the world?"—we have the marvellous sight of St. Peter's commission—"If ye love Me, feed My lambs; if ye love Me, feed My sheep . . . And behold people had their sick laid on couches, that the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them." Oh, what a blessed hope for those who know they have a past!

Now what I stand here then this morning to ask you is—just as yesterday, whether there was the hand of the modern Judas in the Cross—whether there are not now in our generation many who deny Jesus Christ; and lest I seem to blame others, or speak from a pedestal down upon

others, I say that a bishop may deny Jesus Christ in these days quite as easily as any one else. If under the trappings of our authority and office we are not leading a hard, self-denying, simple life; if the clergy, aye and the laity too, cannot feel as a clergyman said the other day he wanted to feel about his bishop, that "he came to him straight from Jesus Christ"—then we have failed miserably. Then by our lives and by our example we are denying our Saviour, and we are putting aside that ideal of a bishop's life which He set us by His own example and precept. And if I preach that to myself, I preach it to you. Is there no denying of Jesus Christ in this City to-day? I am not saying much of the poor boy who comes up from his Sunday Bible class, and is so worried and bullied in the City that he gives it up—I ween our Lord Jesus Christ will have more to say to those who have made him give it up than to the poor lad himself. "If any man cause a stumbling-block to be put in the way of one of these My little ones who believe in Me, it were better that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." But I am thinking rather of the man, the grown man, who used to believe so readily as a boy, who used to go to Sunday school, who came to Christ as it

were quite impulsively across the water, who was confirmed, and stood up and said he would stand by Jesus Christ and his Church until death. What is he doing in his office or in his workshop to-day? If, when the talk goes round which laughs at purity and chastity, and lowers the very standard which Jesus Christ came to raise, he acquiesces in it, he denies Christ. I know that there are numbers of boys and young men who might have been saved in London to-day from going down in the battle, if the older men in the office or in the workshop where they worked had had the moral courage of their opinions. When a working-man, who had the whole place against him for standing up quietly for his religious views, was encouraged by the head of the firm afterwards for having been brave and courageous, he said to him, "If you had been a true Christian you would have stood there by my side." And therefore I would ask those who have come out from these great buildings round us, where character is so made and so marred—Are you denying Christ? Are you one of whom Christ will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of the Father with the holy angels, because in a sinful and adulterous generation you have been ashamed of Him? Or take the girl brought up so carefully. She too used

to love Jesus Christ, she too came out and was confirmed. But she goes into society. What does she do when she finds herself down in the country house where things are said and done which she was taught as a girl to be ashamed of, where no one goes to church, where Sunday is spent in amusement? What line does she take? What line are you taking, you who are now grown up and control a drawing-room and a large circle of acquaintances and friends in the West End of London—what line are you taking in your drawing-room? Are you allowing the Christian truth to be laughed out of the place? Are you allowing younger women to hear things, and be under the power of a standard which you know is less than the Christian standard? Then if so, can you refute the charge that you are denying Jesus Christ to-day? Or take some one here who keeps his own personal life to himself, and who as I speak this morning knows perfectly well that while he says little about his religion, he has in spirit drifted away from his old convictions. He doesn't pray at all. He has almost given up going to church. Sunday finds him at the popular golf links. What is he to say in the presence of the Cross this Holy Week? Is it not true that while he has never said a word against his Master, by his practical life, by his

spiritual observances, and the belief which is in his heart, he is denying Jesus Christ to-day? What is the cause? The cause is different from what it was in St. Peter's day, although the moral cowardice is the same. I think those who see most of popular religion see a sapping of strong convictions in Jesus Christ—not by a reasoned scepticism, not by that noble unbelief which is sometimes a true passage to a man's faith, like the unbelief of St. Thomas, which leads on to strong faith at last, but by a kind of popular acquiescence in a general uncertainty which a man is too slothful to investigate. The magazine article is carelessly read, and because nothing at the time occurs to answer the difficulty faith is lightly tossed aside. But do you think, my friend, when so lightly giving up your Christ—do you suppose that men like the late Mr. Gladstone, with his marvellous range of reading, and his intellect, would have been to the last such a simple Christian if nothing more was to be said for Christianity than is said sometimes in a popular novel in which the hero lightly gives it up? Mr. Gladstone in one of his last writings said that belief in the Incarnation was the one central hope of our poor wayward race—one of the most beautiful testimonies in his last years to the Saviour

whom he loved which could possibly be given. "The one central hope of our poor wayward race!" I would say to you, go back, go on to your knees and ask forgiveness for so lightly denying your Master. Ask some one whom you trust to advise you the best books to read to help you with your doubts. Such a book is "In Relief of Doubt"¹—quite a small and readable book; "An Essay towards Faith," by an American minister;² and others that your clergyman will recommend to you, that you may not, in this spirit of light-hearted scepticism, deny the Master who died for your soul. I pray then that we may all this Holy Week, if we have in any degree denied our Master, experience in some degree the blessedness of St. Peter's restoration. First let Jesus Christ look at you; look up by yourselves, on your knees, or in the first quiet time you have, and picture your Lord with the marks of the Cross on Him. "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter"—and it was that which broke his heart. If you can only by the power of the Spirit believe that He knows you, as if there was not a living person beside you in the world—that He has watched you through the whole time of your wanderings, has heard every

¹ Rev. R. E. Welsh.

² Dr. Robbins.

denial, but yet He is ready to forgive you—that is the first step of repentance.

Then, secondly, let the quiet hours of Good Friday, and the last days of Holy Week, keep the repentance working in you. Don't go out from here and throw aside these thoughts in a moment—think them out, pray over them.

Thirdly, let the personal restoration come, and it cannot come better, if you are deeply penitent and contrite, than in coming back this Easter to your Easter Communion after the careful and solemn preparation of Lent. Jesus in that personal way met St. Peter; He personally meets us. “Here is the bread of life for you to eat, and here for you the wine of life to drink;” and then offer yourselves for service. There are Sunday schools which are languishing for want of teachers in London. “If ye love Me, feed My lambs. . . When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.” There are clergymen in this great City who are longing for workers, for laymen especially to stand by them in their parishes. What are you doing for the kingdom of God? A layman said the other day to his brother layman:—“It seems that many of my brother laymen are under the impression that they have already joined the Church at rest.” The Church—the kingdom of God—is no place for idlers,

but the man who really believes he is forgiven by Jesus Christ; he to whom much is forgiven the same loveth much. And therefore let our prayer be to-day before we separate:—

“Oh, oft forsaken, oft denied,
 Forgive our shame, wash out our sin;
Look on us from Thy Father's side,
 And let that sweet look win.”

WEDNESDAY

“And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee’s children.”—MATT. xxvii. 55, 56.

WE are taking day by day the characters of the disciples, and the part which they played in the Crucifixion. We have spoken of Judas and have discerned his hand in the Cross. We spoke yesterday of St. Peter, and we saw it was not infrequently in our days that Peter again denied his Master, but we should indeed imperfectly survey the work of the followers of Jesus Christ if we left out His women disciples. Christ has been the best friend women ever had. Those of us who have tried to read in the past the writings of Juvenal and Tacitus and their truthful, if ha’f satirical, accounts of the social life of their day, remember what a picture it is of woman as the chattel and the slave of man—how divorce in ancient Rome was so common that it was a

common saying, a woman sometimes had as many husbands as there were months in the year. And when we contrast the difference between that picture and the moving picture in the Gospel which I shall present to you this morning, it is not far to seek, to find whose influence it is that has changed woman from the chattel and the slave of man to be his companion and even his inspiration. And I may say in passing to those who are puzzled why the Church so persistently opposes any change in the existing marriage law of degrees, that it is not from any bigoted interpretation of some difficult passage of the Old Testament ; it is because we believe that the Christian home is the creation of Christ, that it is built up upon certain principles, that our Table of Degrees is founded upon distinct principles of marriage which Jesus Christ taught. And we fear therefore lest if we take one stone out of the perfectly consistent pedestal on which our marriage law stands, we shall not be able to prevent another stone, and another stone, and another stone, being taken away, till the pedestal shall fall, and the pure family home and life of England produced by Christianity be in some way lowered. Why, we ask, should the beautiful relationship between a man and his sister-in-law be in any way marred ? Why should it be im-

possible for a sister to go and care for her dead sister's children without any scandal on her name? Why should there be for a single moment a slur upon what up to now has been one of the most innocent and beautiful relationships in the world? But to come to this moving picture in the Gospel which has inspired and changed the ideas of the world—first take Jesus Christ and His mother. To alter in any degree that relationship between Christ and His mother by exalting His mother into a relationship towards Himself absolutely without any evidence in Holy Scripture is to spoil one of the most beautiful pictures in the New Testament. Doubtless there are some here who work with their hands and keep their mothers, and no one earns one's respect more than a young man who has put off marriage year after year because his father is dead and his mother needs his help. They will understand what a beautiful home it was when Jesus with His own hands worked and kept His mother; and when in the New Testament we come to difficult passages, be sure we misunderstand them if we are thinking Jesus Christ ever showed discourtesy to His mother. "Mother, what is there to me and to thee?" is the literal translation of "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" which sounds in our English translation so hard

and discourteous. He put her back in the gentlest way from interfering with the use of His miraculous powers, seeming as it were to give a hint to future generations not to exalt His mother wrongly in regard to His supernatural power and Himself. Then if it is beautiful to watch Jesus in relation to His mother, what more beautiful picture is there than Jesus Christ in the home at Bethany? There may be some here—men who are lonely, who live by themselves, who perhaps have to live month after month in solitary lodgings. They know what a comfort it is to them and what a rest to be admitted into a home—to be treated as a brother, and even as a son. There are thousands in London who owe an untold debt to the motherly woman who looks after the lodgings where they live—men who have come up here as boys almost, from the country, and have found in the motherly heart of the woman who keeps their lodgings a refreshment, and a strength, and a home. They can picture, as I myself can picture, what Jesus must have found in the home of Bethany, and the very expressions which we find—“Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus,” at the touching way in which the sisters say, “Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died”—give us a beautiful picture of a perfectly pure and beautiful

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relationship existing in that home between Jesus and His friends ; and those who know how grateful a sister is for anything that is done to help her brother will appreciate what Mary did when we are told, thinking over what she could do to show her gratitude, she took the ointment of spikenard—"very costly"—and poured it over His feet, and wiped His feet with her hair. Then again, thirdly, we recall the story of Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene. We may be quite unjustified in identifying Mary Magdalene and the woman who was a sinner. So much have we identified there that a Magdalene has come to mean a penitent. But whatever it was—whether she was the same, or whether the seven devils cast out of her were something quite different—can any one read without a feeling of pathos the devotion of Mary Magdalene to Jesus Christ who not only had given her her life, but all that made life worth living ? So, again, it requires only a little imagination to picture the beautiful friendship between Christ and these mothers of the sons who followed Him. Many of us know that there are few more helpful friends than the mothers of the boys or the sons whom we have taught and helped, and therefore when we read that among those who followed Jesus were the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of

Zebedee's children, we can well understand how these women who had given Jesus Christ, in their sons, what they loved best in the world, thought it but a little thing to give Him themselves as well.

And when we come to think of it, how natural it was that Jesus Christ by His character should win the devotion of the women of the world. There is something in perfect strength, and yet perfect gentleness, which appeals to the best part of woman's nature ; and it is one of those things which makes it so peculiarly damnable, when a man avails himself of the best side of a woman's nature to lure her to her ruin, that it is the best side which the strength of a man or what she thinks is mingled strength and gentleness really calls out. And therefore when there is working in the world perfect strength and perfect gentleness, can we wonder that that incarnation of it won the heart of woman ?

So, again, it is often a question disputed whether women are naturally more religious than men. For myself I believe it would be truer to say that she was more quickly religious than a man ; when men have given their hearts to Christ, they love with as deep devotion, and they follow Him with as perfect perseverance, as any

woman. But doubtless it is true that there is a softness about a woman's nature which makes religion more quickly felt by her than by man. Her fine instincts—the special characteristics of a woman—make the idea of praying, the picture of perfect goodness, and the thought of another world, more quickly real than they sometimes do to men. At any rate, whatever the explanation may be, we find that in the old days there were many women beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto Him.

We turn now from those days to these, and, speaking as I do to such a mingled audience, partly of women and the larger part of men, I must turn first what we have seen in the Gospel into a word for the women, and then into a word for the men.

And first, what has all this to say to the countless women-worshippers who follow Jesus Christ to-day? There are many women beholding the Cross from afar off to-day through the length and breadth of the world; and what does Jesus say from the Cross to His women-worshippers? In the first place, He does not despise their devotion. There is a cheap sneer which says that the churches and chapels are filled with women and not men; and doubtless there is something wrong in a ministry which only at-

tracts the women and does not attract the men. But we men can feel this—that when all is said and done, when the judgment at the last comes, when we shall be judged not by the sneers of a generation, but by the standard of that Man that God has ordained, who will stand best in the judgment? The so-called strong man who was too weak in the workshop to stand up against his colleagues and go to church, or too slothful to get up in time to go at all; or the so-called weak woman who perhaps, in the teeth of much discouragement at home and after a hard week's work, had the strength to stand by her religious convictions? No; Jesus Christ does not despise the devotion of His women-worshippers, but He asks three things of them. First, that there shall be no mawkish or unreal sentiment in their religion. There are Manuals published sometimes which are almost sickening in introducing totally wrong conceptions of the attitude of Christ's women-worshippers towards Himself; and therefore in the devotion which is given there should be precisely that perfectly pure and holy relationship manifested by His women-worshippers of old. And what is said with regard to Christ is true of His Church. I was asked the other day what I meant by saying in a public speech that the women ought to try and

be the strength of the clergy, and not their weakness. I mean what I say—that there ought to be in the body of women belonging to the Church an entirely holy influence; and in no way, as in some cases it happens, should they become a weakness rather than a strength.

So, again, He asks that their devotion shall be as practical as His women-worshippers' devotion of old. "If ye love me keep my commandments"; and the devotion of the women to-day must be shown in the good works of tending the children, and of the works which specially belong to women, which the women-worshippers of old carried out; and, lastly, let them be as faithful unto death.

And if that seems to be His word to the women, what does He say to the men about the women? He says first—"Be conscious of what you are owing at this moment to the best woman whom you know." Who has the strongest influence upon your life? It may be your mother—it may be your wife—it may be your sister—it may be some one you hope one day to make your wife. It may be some such home as I have described, into which you are allowed to enter as a friend and a brother. But I will venture to say that it is probably true at this moment that, humanly speaking, the strongest purifying

influence upon your life is a good woman. Then I say, be grateful for her religion which makes her so. If you are certain that if you were ill to-day, there is some woman who would come with her kind, forgiving hand, and soothe you, and help you, then be grateful for the woman's religion which makes her what she is.

Secondly, respect her religion. There is many a wife who has a bad time at home, for her religion. It ought not to be so; even if the husband cannot yet conscientiously share it, he ought to respect his wife's religion; he ought to stand by her and back her up with the children. How terrible it is for a poor woman by herself to be striving to bring up the children in a godly way, when she gets no backing and no help from her husband at all. Many husbands do help their wives, even if they do not go yet to church. They perhaps will mind the children when she goes to the Holy Communion on a Sunday; and as a clergyman very truly said, "Who shall deny that the husband who does so gets some grace from the sacrament?"

And lastly, seek not only to be grateful for her religion, not only to respect her religion, but do this Holy Week try and share it. What if that woman is meant to be the Angel of deliverance to you? What if she is pleading this Holy Week,

for the last time, with you about your soul? What if her dear eyes looking up into your face are really the eyes of Christ who is looking at you? What if she herself will be lying cold and dead in her grave before next Good Friday—as she may perhaps be? It may be the last pleading through that woman whom you love that you will ever have. Listen to her voice before it is too late, and may she be the Angel sent from God to deliver your soul from bondage, and bring you to the feet of Jesus Christ to-day.

And so may there ever be many women beholding which followed and ministered to Him! May He never want a woman to break the alabaster box of ointment and pour it in devotion on His head! May He never want a woman to wipe His feet with her hair! And may the best and brightest crown on His head, above the crown of thorns, be the devotion of the women whom He found slaves, and left queens!

THURSDAY

“And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy.”—MATT. xxvi. 43.

WE have taken day by day one of the disciples, or one group of the disciples, and watched their behaviour round the Cross, and yet I can imagine that some here have felt: “Well, we don’t feel we have betrayed Christ like Judas; we don’t feel that we at any rate have openly denied Him like Peter; we didn’t feel yesterday a very special message in what was said about the women who beheld the Cross from afar off. What in this last message before Good Friday have you to give us to-day that shall stir our conscience?”

And yet before we face it there is one touching message, among many others, from this vast congregation, which I must notice, and must answer. It is a note without address and without name—just a cry from the deep: “A man who has been tempted above his ability to bear

temptation, and found no way of escape, humbly and respectfully asks your prayers. He is one of the thousands who are hanging day by day upon your words, and begs for a word of comfort, which, by the help of the God he has denied and betrayed, may bring to him true repentance, without which it must be impossible to obtain the grace of the Holy Spirit towards the amendment so eagerly—oh, so eagerly!—desired.”

My brother, what can I say to you but this : that just as Jesus did look upon you as He looked upon St. Peter, and has produced the contrition in you by His look, so He will restore you ; so, knowing you by name, He will lead you on to the paths of usefulness and purity to which He led St. Peter ; and therefore as you find the message of Good Friday come down to you from the Cross to-morrow, you may be sure that you are pardoned and forgiven. But as the old Prayer-Book says : “ If any man cannot in this way quiet his own conscience, let him go to some discreet or learned minister of God’s Word.” If he cannot with the hand of faith take his absolution, and hear it in the ministry of the Church—in the Absolution of the Holy Communion, as it is spoken authoritatively by God’s minister—then let him go to some discreet and learned minister of God’s

Word, and open his grief, that by the ministry of God's Holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice for the quieting of his conscience, and the avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness.

In any case get the sins confessed to God, and the Cross of Christ pledges to you pardon and absolution.

But my special message is to those to whom up to now the words have not gone home, and who, if they described their feelings to-day, would say this :—"The whole thing is so far away from me. I should like to realize all you are speaking of day by day, but prayer has for months been unreal to me. You see I cannot really understand the Cross. I try to picture Jesus going to His death this week, but it is very unreal. My religion, although I have clung to it, seems not a true part of myself at all. Where have I to picture myself in Gethsemane or round the Cross?" And I ask you, my friend who feels like that, to see if you do not find your counterpart on this Maundy Thursday in the disciples who were sleeping in the garden?

And when we look to see what are the causes why thousands of Jesus Christ's disciples are asleep—for there are thousands who feel the

whole thing far from them, by whom prayer is perhaps given up, and who feel their religion utterly unreal—I believe that we should not be wrong in ascribing it to one of four or five causes. In the first place, it is the recurrence of these seasons year by year. You are saying: “Another Holy Week, and another Good Friday! Why, it is just the same year after year!” Or another finds the difficulty that the old, old story has become to them such a twice-told tale that it has ceased to impress them altogether; another has been soothed into lethargy—and don’t forget that, you who are ministers of Jesus Christ—by utter disappointment with the representatives of Jesus Christ’s religion. Many a young man who has started off full of enthusiasm when he has first been converted, has found his elders, to his astonishment, instead of being thrilled, energized, about the wonderful news which he has just believed, treating it all with indifference, living humdrum, inactive, uninspired lives, and the young man who began full of keenness and enthusiasm has been lured to sleep by the apathy and indifference and inconsistency of his elders.

So, again, many a man—and there may be some in this church to-day—who is lying down in his sin, who began by finding his conscience blunted by a state of things in his office or in

society which shocked him as a boy, but who has become so accustomed to it now that his standard is pulled down to their standard, and instead of his active conscience pricking him with regard to the things he does, and the things he sees, and the things in which he acquiesces, he is sleeping—he is sleeping simply with a dulled conscience to what once pained him and distressed him. Or, fifthly, there may be some like the disciples, sleeping for sorrow. I have seen men and women so overwhelmed with trouble—upon whom one thing after another has come—first the loss of a child, then bankruptcy, then some terrible pain or sickness to themselves—till I have found these poor people so blunted by their sorrow that they could feel nothing, and understand nothing of the comfort of religion—they were sleeping for sorrow.

Now if that is some sort of a fair description of what produces sleeping disciples, the next question is, how are we to consider, and what are we to think of the sleep of Christ's disciples during His Agony? And when we turn to the disciples of old we make, naturally, all possible allowances that we can. Here were men worn with work, worn with anxiety, who had been watching for long—we try to say that it was

natural for them to be sleeping in utter weariness ; but when we look at it we find that our Lord to-night was disappointed when He found His disciples were asleep. Is it not a touching thing that He who had comforted so many, He who had given His sympathy and His love to thousands around Him, when He turned in His moment of real want for a little sympathy Himself, He found it lacking ? And we cannot but feel this—that if the disciples had been in complete tune with their Master, in real spiritual sympathy, they would have been ready to night to have given Him that sympathy for which His human heart craved. So, again, surely after all the teaching which they had, they ought to have realized a little more that they were face to face with the crisis of the world. What should we think of a man who travelled ten thousand miles to see, say, the transit of Venus, and then was found sleeping during the precious minutes which alone would make worth while all that he had gone through ? And therefore when they had been told that the prophecy would be fulfilled to-night—"I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered"—and having had it revealed to them that He was indeed the Son of the Living God, you would have thought that these men who had followed

so far would have been intellectually and spiritually awake to be present themselves at the great crisis of the world's history. Or at any rate, in the third place, we should have thought that conscious of the danger which threatened their Master, they would have remained awake to guard Him so far as they could to the last; but if we are obliged therefore to say that the sleep of these disciples to-night is a painful thing, how much greater blame and disgrace is due to the sleep of the disciples to-day! It is at once both inexcusable, unfeeling, and most dangerous, because when you and I face all that we ought to have learned from that day to this, is it not true that we who have believed in Jesus Christ and seen the Gospel in action upon human life, ought to have realized far more than these disciples all that Jesus Christ is to the world? Have you ever been face to face with death? If you have, and everything earthly was slipping from you, to what hope could you turn, or did you turn, in your hour of death? I have been myself with hundreds while they died, and if I was not able, in their hour of mortal conflict, to whisper into their ears about One who faced death and conquered death, I had rather not go and see a dying man. I have nothing to say to him. There is nothing in what I have

read in Plato or Aristotle, or any literary book in the world, to give that man what he hopes for in the hour of death. Have you ever been face to face with a sin which has conquered you? Have you ever been like that dear brother whose letter I read to you, conscious of an awful denial and an awful betrayal, and yet not knowing what to do? What hope is there for you? "Sin," say the greater writers of to-day, from the worldly point of view, "cannot be forgiven." It cannot be forgiven. Why should it be? You cannot undo it; there is not one of you can undo the lie you told, the harm you did to some boy long ago, or the harm that your example has been doing, perhaps for years, among younger men and women where you work. You cannot undo it, but you can have it forgiven by a miracle, and that miracle we believe to have been worked on Good Friday on the Cross of Christ, and therefore when we face it—that sin otherwise cannot be forgiven—then we realize that Christ to the sinner is absolutely everything—"the one central hope of our poor wayward race."

Am I speaking to some who are mourners, who mourn this week because last Holy Week the dear wife, or the child, or the brother, or the sister was with them? Who has the slightest hope for you? What gives you the very smallest

idea that you will ever see them again? I know of nothing unless it is true—"In My Father's house are many mansions, and if it were not so I would have told you." And therefore, if these things are true, it is inexcusable for us to sleep while Christ agonizes; if at this awful cost which we watch to-day and to-morrow, He worked the redemption of the world, if it was at the cost of this awful agony He bought us our hope and brought us our salvation, then I say there is not a man here, and not a woman here, who, if they are asleep whilst Christ is suffering, has the slightest excuse at all.

So again from another point of view, surely it is most dangerous to sleep. "While men slept the enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat"—so the parable says. That is precisely what he does now; while men sleep he works. It may seem to you a light thing to have given up your Bible and your prayers, and going to church, but the devil is most active while you are asleep. It is a terrible revelation how well-meaning men and women, when temptation comes, will sometimes do almost anything. People brought up in good homes will lie in the moment of temptation to cover what they have done, as if they had been brought up to lie, because the devil has sown tares among the

wheat while they have slept. Can you wonder if your boys go wrong, if your girls turn out badly—if you were sleeping? Why, it is the devil's chance! While you have been asleep he has been in your home, and he has sowed tares among the wheat.

And as to Holy Week and Good Friday coming over and over again—well, there are only a few of them before we die, and every one has its message. It is out of mercy that they have not been brought to an end sooner. Have you thought what we hope to be the end after the grave? Surely that it may be said of us what the Guardian Angel says in the *Dream of Gerontius* of the truly trained spirit:

“The eager spirit has darted from my grasp,
And with the intemperate energy of love
Flies to the dear feet of Emanuel.”

That is the truly Christian spirit. Would your spirit—I ask you frankly to-day—would your spirit, my brother, or yours, my sister, if liberated from the body to-day, would it fly with the intemperate energy of love to the dear feet of Emanuel? Not if you are sleeping; not if Good Friday and Holy Week are nothing to you; not if you are not using every single chance as it comes round to educate your spirit to be so in tune with Emanuel your Lord that

the spirit should fly instantaneously to His feet.

And so my message to you—the last message before Good Friday—is this : “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead”—it is not too late yet—your eyes are heavy, you are dense with sleep—you have not prayed for months—God is far away, but it is not too late. This Holy Week has been sent to you by God to rouse you in time. “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” Awake to the penitence—watch the Cross, and let the sight of it work repentance in your soul—awake to be forgiven. “Behold, I saw an ocean of light and love flow over an ocean of darkness and death, and in that I saw the infinite love of God; and the day on which it flowed over the ocean of darkness and death”—according to Wesley, who said the words—“was Good Friday.” Awake to pray—“Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.” Awake to work, work, work—while it is day. “The night cometh when no man can work.” And if you listen to the message then, as the old prayer says, “when you awake you shall watch with Christ, and when you sleep at last you shall rest in Him.”

THE THREE HOURS' SERVICE, GOOD FRIDAY

AFTER the singing of the hymn, "Oh, come and mourn with me awhile," the Bishop said:—

My friends, we have addressed for another year to one another that most touching invitation, and we gather together for another Good Friday round the Cross of Jesus Christ. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." When one looks down on such a sight as this, on such a multitude, all gathered round the Cross, one sees in some measure how that prophecy, which seems so impossible of fulfilment, is being gradually fulfilled. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." He is lifted up, and we have come here from all parts of London to-day—we have come here to look upon Jesus as He dies upon the Cross. Let Him draw us with all our minds and all our souls, and all our beings, more and more to Himself. I shall never forget

how one poor lad in Bethnal Green, who had never prayed, never been to church, never been baptized till his death-bed, during the ten days when he lay dying, at last learned to believe in the Cross of Jesus Christ, and as paralyzed by the accident, from his neck down to his feet, he could neither move his hands or feet, nor his body, he had tied to the rope over his bed, so that he could repeat it as he died at last :—

“Oh, my Saviour, lifted
On the Cross for me!
Draw me in Thy mercy
Nearer to Thee.”

Every Three Hours on Good Friday one feels induced to say, “Blessed Good Friday! Blessed Cross! Blessed Saviour!” I have known more souls converted, more lives changed by the Three Hours on Good Friday than by any other three hours in the year; but as we come to-day, we have to take four or five precautions to ourselves, if we are to have exercised upon us by the sight of the Cross the full influence which it ought to have.

And the first is to have pervading this vast congregation a quiet reverence. Don't be disturbed by the fact of so many others being here. Single out yourself as if you for the time were

the only one who was looking at the Cross. St. Paul said : " He loved me and gave Himself for me "—not in a selfish way, not as if He was not thinking and giving His life for thousands besides, but that so he might not lose, by being one of a great multitude, the personal message which the Cross had for him. I ask you then, when we kneel down presently, to look up at the Cross and say—" He loved me and gave Himself for me," reminding yourself that from the Cross Christ sees you individually, has seen you all your life, and watched you from the cradle until now with the same yearning individual love as if there was not another sinner to save in the whole world. That is the first thing.

Then while in one sense you think of yourself, the second thing to do is to forget yourself. There must be no self-consciousness to-day, there must be no thinking about your feelings ; it is not a question of religious feeling but a question of faith. I who speak to you must lose myself, I must be just a voice among a great multitude speaking the thoughts of many hearts—just a finger, as it were, lifted up to point the others to the Cross. Too often we have a morbid and introspective religion. To-day I ask you—on Good Friday—concentrate your whole mind upon Jesus Christ upon His Cross.

And thirdly, seek, as you look at the Cross, to find out in your lives and characters whether there is anything which is holding you back from giving your whole heart to your Saviour. We do not meet here for sentiment, we meet here for a practical purpose. We meet here in order to find out for the years to come, and for the days to come, what there is in our heart and our lives hindering us from that entire devotion which Christ claims.

And the last thing—and if we have that with the others, then nothing can prevent the Cross working upon our soul to-day—is a belief in the Holy Spirit of God. It is impossible for the words of any speaker, it is impossible for ourselves by any jugglery with our hearts to produce contrition, to convict ourselves of sin, or to soften our hard hearts into loving devotion. That office alone belongs to the Holy Spirit of God, and I ask you at once to kneel down with me—all of you—to pray to the Holy Spirit of God, who is going to use this great service for His own purpose, to take charge of us, to shed Himself abroad over us, to take the things of Christ and show Him to us, to convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, and to bring home to hearts who have not believed it yet the full salvation and redemption of the world.

And I will use for you, and you shall use for me, the words of the most beautiful and ancient prayer to the Holy Spirit—which most of you know by heart—we will not sing it, but we will pray it from our hearts—“Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire.”

[“Veni Creator Spiritus” was said by all, kneeling.]

Fortified, strengthened, enlightened, as we believe, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we now turn our gaze towards the Cross, and we ask: Who lies there upon the Cross? And the first answer is—and we must give it all its awful significance—the first answer is that it is God. Those who only partly think out their faith are apt to stop short in understanding that, unless it was God, none of the things for which we Christians look to the Cross could possibly be given to us. In the first place, unless it was God upon the Cross, we have no answer at all to the suffering of the world. How bitterly some of us see the suffering around us! We are apt to say, “What possible reason have we to believe that God is Love?” I know of no reason at all, nothing that convinces my intellect or soothes my heart, unless that was God upon the Cross. If it was, then I have an answer—if it was, then He seems to say to me:—

“O heart I made—a heart beats here ;
Face my hands fashion’d—see in it Myself—
Thou hast no power, nor may’st conceive of Mine.
But love I gave thee, with Myself to love,
And thou must love Me who have died for Thee.”

Yes, if He is God, there is something which enables me to bear the worst suffering, and see the worst suffering, because it is no Apollo that I worship—rose-crowned, and out of touch of human grief, but “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” And if that was God, I can bear the worst, or hope to bear the worst, for my God has come into the trouble and into the sorrow with me.

So again we speak of Atonement. But what Atonement is possible if that was not God upon the Cross? How could man work an Atonement with man? Even now we take it by faith—“The Son of Man is come to give His life a ransom for many.” It would be a bold Christian here who said he understood the Atonement; but it is because we do believe on His word and on His authority that we can say as John Wesley said—“I saw an ocean of light and love flow over an ocean of darkness and death, and in that I saw the infinite love of God; and the day that the ocean of light and love flowed over the ‘ocean of darkness and death, was Good

Friday." But if it is true, and we must repeat it to ourselves as we kneel presently, with awe-struck wonder—if it is true that it is God, the Infinite God who made the stars, the Infinite God who lives on for ever—it is also true that it is man—man upon the Cross. It is a real man's body that writhes upon the Cross in pain. It is a real man's eyes that look out upon us from the Cross—not one less pain, not one less agony, because He was God—true man, with a man's mind that understood and felt ten times as much as we should have understood and felt, who was none the less sensitive in His soul, who felt the hissing and the cursing and the hate coming up against Him, none the less keenly because a word could have liberated Himself from it ; a real man suffering to the utmost ; we shall not grasp it all if we do not believe that. And if He was God and man, yet one Christ, what comes out so specially at the very beginning of the Crucifixion ? What star is it that seems to gleam forward out of the galaxy of His virtues ? Surely His patience. We know well enough how hard it is to be patient. I may be speaking to some to-day who know that their tempers are their worst difficulties—who know how difficult it is, when things go wrong, to have their souls wrapped in perfect calm and quiet. I ask them as their first

lesson—and I ask myself with all the worries and anxieties that come daily, naturally, upon one with such a charge as mine—to look at the Cross—to mark the marvellous patience: six times tried this morning; hurried from judgment-seat to judgment-seat; not having sat down, until He was laid upon the Cross, all last night; no insult spared Him: scourging, spitting, mocking, smiting on the face, and yet perfectly calm: “If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou Me?” At last they drag Him to Calvary, they put the Cross upon the ground, they take Him, they lay Him upon the Cross as it lies upon the ground before it is lifted into its place. His hands and arms are stretched out, the legs are drawn down, the nails driven through the hands and feet, the Cross is lifted with the body on it, the body swings forward, then back, and now He lies before us on the Cross, our Crucified Saviour—crowned with thorns—and we have, as we look upon Him, to weep with Him, yet not for Him. “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.” Not for Him. To bring pity to Him now would be absolutely dishonouring to Him; to make this service one of sentiment, to dwell upon the horrors of the scene, would be to forget that He is the King of Glory

through it all—would be to forget that “I lay my life down of Myself.” But while we do not, and must not, weep for Him, we must weep, as it were, with Him, and we shall do that by kneeling down now, and in silence and in quiet asking ourselves these very searching questions. Is there—and no one knows but ourselves and God—is there some known sin upon our conscience which is helping to crucify that Saviour? We have seen—those who have been here these last days—that Judas still has his hand in the Cross, Peter still denies Him. Is there in your life, as seen from the point of view of the Cross, anything which helped to hang Him there? Then, dear brother and sister—I ask myself the question too—if there is, the only way in which we can weep with Jesus Christ to-day is by tearing that out of our life, by confessing it now. “If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee: it is better to enter into life with one eye than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire.” If there is one thing we can do to help Him, to sympathize with Him on the Cross, it is to give up that sin.

THE FIRST WORD.

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

AND now one by one we seek in the power of the Holy Spirit to gather up the last words which Jesus said. And remember—as the hymn so beautifully said at the beginning—it is not only the words He said :—

“But all these hours His silence cried
For mercy on the souls of men.”

And yet one would always feel cheated at a Three Hours' service if there was anything else given on which to meditate, than the last words of Jesus on the Cross. The last few words we gather up always more rapidly, as they were uttered one after another in the last moments; but these opening words,—what a fund of meditation they supply. The first was uttered when our Lord was lying upon the Cross before it was lifted; and as men were nailed upon the Cross they often, so we are told, used to utter cries of blasphemy, and curse the men who were obliged to put them to such exquisite pain. But

as our Lord Jesus Christ felt the nails go through His hands and feet, all He said was (the first word from the Cross)—“ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

In the first place, what a marvellous example ! I believe that there is nothing in the world that many of us find harder than really to forgive. We say, perhaps, that we forgive, but cannot forget, and in one sense that is perfectly true. No one can really forget any important event in life, good or bad, but it too often happens that we do not forgive ; and therefore if the first lesson I have asked you to take home from the Cross is the patience of Jesus Christ—His extraordinary patience—to have wrapped round your souls in all the worries of life, just like the atmosphere of the earth is wrapped round the earth to stop the friction—so the second is, really to forgive. I dare say there are many here who have grudges against some one or another, who have had some quarrel lasting on perhaps for years, and who have brought it with them to the Cross—it would be blasphemy to take it away—it would be blasphemy to come here, and then to go away unsoftened with regard to that grudge or that quarrel. It may be that you cannot make it up ; it may be that the other person will not meet you as you seek to heal the quarrel. We are only

told "so far as it is possible" to live at peace with all men ; but I do ask you this, and in the name of the Crucified—to go back and see whether it is your pride and your conceit and your hardness that is keeping that quarrel alive. You cannot be forgiven unless you forgive, and perhaps one of the very efforts that is required to bring you nearer to Christ is to forgive that person to-day. And as with ourselves as individuals, so with the nation. We London bishops to-day have ventured to appeal to the whole of London to pray earnestly for peace with our enemies—if that peace, we say, can be rightly had. It may not be possible rightly to have it yet ; no peace would be more fatal than an ephemeral peace with no lasting power in it. It was impossible for peace to be given to the world until after Calvary ; but this we do think—and we believe we carry all the Christian people of London with us—that we are bound to pray for peace ; at the foot of the Cross we are bound to see that we are in a peaceable spirit, and that as prayers are offered on the one side for peace, so prayer shall be offered on the other. We believe that there is only one answer to both sides when they pray ; that there is one God who judges rightly ; that it is only to the shallow that there is any inconsistency in two sides praying—even

when they pray for something different—because there is one answer in the Eternal Counsels to both prayers; but when both sides pray for one thing, and both believe in Christ, may we not believe that in answer to a united tide of intercession God shall grant us the blessings of a permanent and equitable peace?

Then secondly, not only is it a marvellous example, but also a wonderful inspiration. I do not know of anything which in moments of discouragement more cheers one on than thinking that “Jesus Christ is praying for me.” Have you thought of that? There may be some here growing discouraged with their fight, in the middle of an office where no one else believes in religion, or even perhaps in personal purity, who are getting tired with the strain of it all. I ask you to think that Jesus Christ is praying for you. “Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat, but I am praying for you that your faith fail not.” Or some poor girl, lonely in London, finding it very hard perhaps even to make her living, often discouraged, often disheartened—why, my sister, is it nothing that Jesus Christ is praying for you, that His hands are raised for you, and that your name is engraved on the palms of His hands? And yet that is the blessed truth—pleading His

own Atonement, His perfect obedience, for you. You cannot be overwhelmed with discouragement if you believe that.

And yet not only is there an example, and an inspiration, but also surely a reproach. "They know not what they do." We thought just now of the sins which, if we look at ourselves at all in self-examination, we must see. But have you ever thought of the numbers of sins by which we hurt the Saviour, of which we are only partially conscious? We saw earlier in the week—some of us—how Judas deceived himself; on Good Friday morning we see how Pilate kept deceiving himself at every step, trying to get rid of the guilt by washing his hands, trying to throw the blame for what he did upon the multitude. I do pray that before we are able to put to our souls the excuse, "We know not what we do," that in the silence now—instead of singing another hymn, we will first ask ourselves a few questions, and then pray and intercede, especially for some of these who have asked our prayers, whose letters I have brought with me, and which are only a few of the more piercing requests for intercession which have been sent in during the last few days. We will now kneel down and offer them up, and also as a Christian people pray to the God of Peace to grant us peace.

THE SECOND WORD.

“To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.”

WE now come to the most beautiful incident which I suppose ever happened in the history of the world. I look forward myself every year to hear this word from the Cross. I think it is for us the greatest possible comfort and the greatest possible inspiration ; we see when we look at the Cross, that Christ is not lying there upon the Cross alone ; on each side of Him there are lying on their crosses two who are very different in character. It is almost, as has been said, like two turbid and muddy streams which meet some pure mountain torrent before they empty themselves into the ocean ; and we can hardly find two lives, in all probability, of more complete contrast to the life of Jesus Christ than the two thieves crucified on each side of Him. At first not unnaturally they seem to have joined in the chorus of the hissing and insults which greeted Him. Perhaps in some way they associated being brought earlier than they otherwise would have been, to be crucified with Jesus

Christ—they ascribed the cause to Him. But as the hours went on, there was something about the bearing and the manner and the look of Jesus Christ, that worked the most wonderful influence upon the heart of one of the men. Tradition says—but of course it is only tradition—that the shadow of Christ and His Cross sheltered him against the burning heat. But whatever may have been the cause, and no doubt by His Spirit Christ was acting upon his heart—he turned at last to Christ and said :—“ Lord, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom.” We are apt sometimes to speak almost patronizingly of the penitent thief, but if we think over it, there hardly has ever been such a magnificent display of faith as was shown in that prayer. There, with all the rulers against Him, with no one believing Him fully, perhaps no one in the world at that moment fully believing Him to be the Son of God, with the faith of the disciples distinctly shaken by what had happened, and in spite of His apparent inability to rescue Himself from His foes—this poor robber, perhaps led away as a young man or a boy, like many of those who turn out badly as we see to-day in our great City—has the extraordinary faith to see in that poor, bruised, battered criminal by his side a King. I wonder, brothers and sisters, whether we should

have had the faith to see it. Patronize—despise—the penitent thief! Why, I venture to say it was the most magnificent thing, the most inspiring thing, that ever happened in the history of character. “Lord, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom.” And then if there was faith in it, see also what humility there was! No excuses, no pleading extenuating circumstances, no saying he had never had a chance of growing up good, but “Lord, remember me—just as I am, without one plea—just as I am, remember me.” Oh, if we could get in our intercessions, in our confessions, that perfect humility—as Bishop Andrewes used to say so often in his prayers from the Psalms—“Despise not Thou the work of Thine own hands”—with no false humility, with no exaggerated terms, but simply laying ourselves as we are at the foot of the Cross, we might attain to something of the humility of the prayer of the penitent thief. We will try and do it when we kneel down presently.

Then, thirdly, notice the courage. It is a difficult thing in a drawing-room when religion is being scoffingly spoken of to say something at the risk of offending your friend, in order that the honour of the Saviour shall not be tainted or tarnished in your presence, and there are numbers who do not do it to-day; it is not an easy thing

when there are vulgar and coarse jests bandied about in the bank, or the warehouse, or the office, not an easy thing to say you will have nothing to say to them, and will not have those words used in your presence without protest, and many do not do it. The tone of the whole of London would be different if every one had the courage of the penitent thief; for instead of adopting the scoffing tone of his fellow, at the risk of being laughed at, in the teeth of all that was going on so close to him—he bore his witness. Remember the crosses were raised only two feet above the heads of the people; we are apt sometimes to forget that they were not high up, so that they could hear nothing, but they were close by, so that they could hear everything. The third thing, then, which commands our respect and our affection is the courage of the penitent thief.

Then listen to how Christ received the penitent's words. We can imagine how grateful they were; you know what it is when everybody is against you, and the story is believed about you, and you meet cold looks everywhere, and you see that the whole tide of public opinion is on the other side, and some friend comes up, and he just gives you a grip of his hand, and he says in your ear, "I do not believe a word of it; I am as great a friend to you as ever," or does some little

tiny act of courtesy—how grateful it is! It brings tears to your eyes which no abuse ever brought; you are hardened by the abuse. Just think how grateful to our sensitive, loving Saviour was that word from the penitent thief. Why, we Christians feel we could bless that penitent thief for having given, just when He needed it, the little bit of human comfort that our Saviour needed; and He answered him back with a word that has cheered ten thousand times ten thousand: “To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.”

Then there is a Paradise—then there is a place of peace. What a comfort to you who had that dear brother or sister with you last Good Friday at the Three Hours’ Service, or the father, or the mother, or the friend, or the child, and who are not with you to-day. There is a place of peace.

“Far out of sight,

While sorrows still enfold us, lies the fair country where
our hearts abide;

And of its joys is nought more wondrous told us than these
few words—we shall be satisfied.”

It was fit that the revelation of Paradise should be given in the midst of the pain of the Cross. So not only is there a Paradise, but Paradise is to be with Christ. “To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.” We need not distract our thoughts by wondering of what it consists, nor

whether we shall be happy there, if we ever are allowed to go there. The whole essence of Paradise is to be with Christ! Even now on earth what does it matter where we are, what does it matter what we have? The whole essence of happiness is to be with those we love—that is all that human happiness consists in—and therefore it is enough to believe that our dear ones are with Christ. It is enough to believe, if by God's infinite mercies we are allowed to go there, that we shall spend that blessed time after death at the feet of Christ in Paradise.

And then—"to-day." So quickly. No long waiting for forgiveness for all those years of sin. No, he had confessed and he was forgiven. "To-day"—summing up all his long penitence—compressing it into a moment—he received forgiveness, because he was penitent—instantaneous forgiveness. "I have sinned against the Lord." "The Lord also hath put away thy sin." "To-day," as a writer says, "—what speed! in Paradise—what rest! with Me—what companionship!"

THE THIRD WORD

“Woman, behold thy son . . . Behold thy mother.”

AND now as we look round, we see who there is around the Cross. We notice that our Lord, as He looked down, saw a little group. Perhaps they had only been brought to the Cross quite lately. When St. John went away from seeing the trial, it is almost certain that he went to break the news and to soothe and to help the mother of our Lord. And whether he had just brought her to the Cross, or whether she had been there from the very beginning, we have no means of knowing. But as our Lord looked from the Cross, He saw this little group standing by themselves, and true ever with His loving heart to his duty and love to His mother, He looked across to the little group, and He said: “Woman, behold thy son,” and with a look to St. John, not even addressing him by any name, He said: “Behold thy mother.” And when we think what it is that we are to learn from that touching incident—and the whole description of each one of these incidents is so living, so life-like, it

is inconceivable that any human mind could have possibly invented them—the first lesson which seems to come down from the Cross, as Jesus says these words to His mother and to His friend, is that there is a blessing upon the charities of home life. After all is said and done, our happiness stands and falls very much with our home life. There are some who are very pleasant, and very agreeable, and very courteous, to strangers, who are very popular indeed in society, but whose own people could tell a very different story indeed. There is the lady of fashion, who is liked in society, but whose servant, who has to bear, perhaps, the ill-temper which is hidden from the world, would have a very different story if she had to tell the truth about her mistress's character. There are the petty trials of home life—the bearing with the old man's story over and over again; the fretful child whom it is our lot or duty to take care of day after day; incompatibility of temper which was found out too late when the early marriage took place; there are no limits to the difficulties and the probation of home life—and therefore when Jesus, in addition to all that He had to deal with on the Cross—in addition to the great work of the salvation of mankind by His own Atonement, which He was making for the sins of the world—gave His

separate and special blessing to this little group, He was blessing the charities and the love of home. It is a great mistake for people to try and escape from the discipline of their home life, even to do good outside, if they are running away from their homes. It is a great mistake to imagine that they cannot be doing their duty to Christ in that restricted sphere of the home. Many a girl, who, if she had stayed by her home duties, would afterwards have had a sphere opened out for her of real usefulness in missionary work, but who required the prosaic, if useful, discipline of keeping her temper at home—has come out too soon, and neglected those duties, and has not had a blessing upon her work outside. And so numbers are almost eating their hearts out in the homes of England, because they are longing to do something for Jesus Christ. It is true that some sons and daughters may by their parents' selfishness be kept from missionary work, but, on the other hand, there are many to whom Jesus says to-day from the Cross: "Go to thy home, and let them know there what great things the Lord has done for thee," and who will find in the patient doing of little duties a sphere of usefulness and a means of grace they could find nowhere else.

So, again, what an elevation is given to friend-

ship by this word from the Cross ! We scarcely make enough of our friendships. We ought to remember that every true friendship goes on into the eternal world. Many people, even when they are quite sure that their friend is gone into a better world, are apt to think that he has been transfigured beyond them ; many a brother is thinking that his sister is perhaps changed into something different now, and will not love him so much, and will not understand him as she used to do on earth. I believe that we have in this word from the Cross a very comforting revelation about the human ties in another world. I believe that Jesus, who loved to give back the son to his mother, who when He raised him off the bier gave him to his mother, who on the Cross had time enough, and love enough, to care for His own human ties, and see that His mother was provided for, and give a mark of confidence to His friend, is always joining mothers to their sons, and sons to their mothers, in Paradise—that the human ties given and created by Him go on into the other world—that Paradise is a human place, a place that men and women can enjoy—that He would never have implanted that love for your wife, your brother, your sister, your husband, your mother or father, if that love was to be trampled out in the other

world—that though it is quite true, “they neither marry nor are given in marriage” (because the carnal part of love is only, as it were, for this earthly world), yet that everything which is real in love, everything real in friendship, everything real in those blessed ties, will pass on into the eternal world, and that Jesus meant to tell us so upon the Cross. He meant to say:—“Make your friendship of such a kind that it can last on; never do something to your friend out of pure selfishness which will spoil that friendship in another world; never let your friend come to you and say, ‘It was you who led me wrong’”—but that those friendships which to some of us are to-day the light of life, the greatest comfort that we have, must so be lived out that they may pass on into a blessed friendship which will last for ever. That is the second message of this word.

And then, lastly, I do believe we ought to understand from this the iniquity of ever allowing any one in the church to be lonely. We were meant to be—this church of ours—the most loving brotherhood and sisterhood the world has ever known, and we fail to be—we fail to be. We have numbers in this great City who are very lonely; many who come to our churches do not find the hand of fellowship stretched out

to them ; they may worship perhaps in the same church year after year, and yet not feel any sense of brotherhood at all. There may be some in the very house where you are living—the lodger at the top of the house, who is perhaps sinking into despair, or falling into bad ways from sheer loneliness. Go home, my friend, from the Cross with that feeling of love in your hearts which Christ had ; see that no one is lonely if you can help it ; let the Church have always the warm, generous heart of her Master Who died upon the Cross to-day ; cheer up some one ; stand by some one ; throw your homes open to some one—people get so selfish about their home life, simply thinking of their children and themselves, forgetting the thousands and thousands who have no happy home. Take back a generous feeling from the Cross, and work it out in your life ; and then you will understand something of what Jesus meant when He said : “ Woman, behold thy son Behold thy mother.”

THE FOURTH WORD

“My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”

AND now a great change comes over the scene upon Calvary. Up to now Jesus has been lying beneath the scorching heat of the hot Syrian sun, and it only added to His pain that that hot sun must have been aggravating the wounds which had been inflicted by the scourging; but now a most wonderful and awful thing happened. An utter darkness came over the hillside, and wrapped the Cross in gloom. Instead of gibes and cries around the Cross, there seems to have been for nearly three hours an almost complete silence. This awful darkness—it is impossible by any natural explanation to understand it; it was just one of those instances where Nature seems to sympathize with what is taking place on earth; the sun, as it were, hid its face from the sight of its Creator on the Cross. And one may even suppose that the actual darkness and gloom was almost a relief to our Saviour as it lay round the Cross. But it was not only that there was gloom and darkness upon the hillside; there was also at this period a mysterious dark-

ness which came down over our Saviour's soul. This latter darkness is as inexplicable as the other—we shall never understand, and it is just as well we never should, precisely what this awful gloom and darkness was. But this we do know, that at this period when it came down, our Saviour went through His most awful agony. We can picture in some way what we feel, for instance, in going into a great hospital in London, full of the victims of wrong, and when one sees the awful ravages of human sin, and often the callousness of the victims about it, there comes over one a kind of horrible feeling that Satan is, after all, the ruler of the world, that the forces of evil are so horrible and terrible, and so strong, that all some weak man or woman can do against them is perfectly useless. A man who was shut up once in a carriage for a number of miles in an express train with men who were cursing and swearing, gambling, and using the foulest oaths, and revealing the sensuality and wickedness of their nature, said afterwards he had received some sort of realization of what hell must be. To be shut up with those whose whole thought and whole mind is full of loathsome ideas, who have seen and hated both Christ and His Father—that must be—to some extent that may give us some sort of idea of what our pure and blessed Saviour felt when all the forces of

wickedness with which He was contending rolled, as it were, over His soul, and in that darkness He tasted, so far as it was possible for Him to taste, the punishment of sin, which is separation from God ; and for two hours and three quarters at least that darkness lay upon His soul, and all through it He was going through a prolonged agony, such as He never felt even in the Garden of Gethsemane, and the agony burst at last from Him in these words : “ My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ? ” It seems almost as if, looking back and seeing how one after another had forsaken Him, He had lost His last support ; “ Judas has betrayed Me, Peter has denied Me, but so long as I had My Father’s face bending down upon Me, I could stand anything, but now—My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ? ” God had not forsaken Him, and that Jesus did not believe He had really forsaken Him is shown by His saying still, “ *My God, My God.* ” But as a Christian poet says :—

“ It went up from the Holiest’s lips,
That of the lost no son should use
Those words of desolation.” ¹

And the real reason why He suffered for us that outer darkness was in order that not one

¹ Mrs. Browning.

single follower of His in all the ages that were to come should ever feel that he was forsaken. I may be speaking to some to-day who have known what it is to feel the darkness of doubt—nay, who know what it is to-day—who have come here either from old association, or from some pathetic longing that perhaps the sight of the Cross or some words spoken about the Cross may bring light into their poor dark minds—who, as some one wrote, I remember, last Good Friday, “Oh pray for me on Good Friday—I to whom Good Friday used to mean so much, but now means nothing.” Is it not awful, that darkness, when we are not quite sure whether there is a God at all? Is it not awful when we have come to believe, or half believe, that there was no Christ Who lay upon the Cross for us at all? Is it not awful when we kneel down and try to pray, and we cannot find God anywhere, and we put up our hands and we touch nothing? Well might a French writer say: “When a man tells me that he does not believe in God, I take off my hat before him, as before one who has suffered a great loss.”

What comfort is there in this word for you, my brother in doubt! God has not forsaken you any more than He forsook our Lord Jesus Christ. You can still say through the darkness, “My God, My God.” Doubt may be,

after all, only a probation for you ; doubt has been called the last trial of the sons of God. It may be only the travail pangs of a true faith ; a boy's faith or girl's faith often goes through this phase on its way to become a man and woman's faith, and what the test is now, is whether you will hold on through the darkness. Don't give up your prayers ; don't give up going to church—nay, if you are a communicant, don't give up going to the Communion. You are wanting to believe ; you are longing for life. "They that will to do the will of God shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." At last you will look back on another Good Friday, upon your darkness to-day, and you will thank Christ that by His word from the Cross He encouraged you to go on—to hold on through the darkness until you came into that glorious light for which you will be thanking Him some day.

Or perhaps there is some one here who is going through the awful darkness of a cruel temptation. "All Thy waves and storms have gone over me." You are going through that, and the sun is hidden entirely from you ; your ship is, as it were, battling on, but there is no light at all—like the ship which carried St. Paul before the shipwreck. Surely there is this comfort

for you. Christ suffered that darkness that you might never lack strength in your temptation. If this is Jesus, the Son of the God Most High who can save to the uttermost those who come unto God through Him, cannot He save a lad in London who is struggling with temptation? Is He too weak, do you suppose, for you to catch hold of His hand? Do you suppose He cannot pull you out of the temptation as He has pulled thousands before now? Why, of course He can, and he suffered the evil, the darkness and the desolation, that you might never be forsaken, and He looks down from the Cross upon you to-day, and He says:—"Never despair. My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." You are very near the end of the darkness and the storm. Hold on a little longer, and that storm shall die away into the distance, and if you are faithful you shall be found strong and brave and pure at the end of the trial. And so with others—we might go through these darknesses one by one—so with a man who has lost the light of his eyes by a stroke; so with the woman whose husband lies buried in South Africa, and her heart is desolate, and she is left alone with the children, and she hardly knows where to turn in her desolation. "My God, My God, why hast

Thou forsaken Me"—it is what she says, and what he says—but Christ said it first, and do believe that you shall see them again; do believe that while he or she are being trained in Paradise, you are being trained by the discipline of sorrow here, and there shall come a day when you with him, or with her, shall look back from Paradise upon this trial-time on earth and know that—no, not for a moment were you out of the everlasting arms of your Father, and in that brightness the darkness shall look like a bad dream.

Let us, then, kneel down and pray for courage and for patience and for perseverance through the darkness, that so on our doubt, and on our trouble, and on our temptation, the light may break at last.

THE FIFTH WORD

"I thirst."

It is always a relief when that last bitter cry is over; for when the darkness was passed, all the calmness, and quiet, and peaceable happiness, and

even joy, which characterized our Saviour came back to Him; and therefore we gather up the last three short cries delivered one after another in quick succession—we always gather them up—it seems most natural to do it—with fewer words than with those longer—deeper in some sense—thoughts which occupy us at the beginning of the Three Hours. And it is indeed an extraordinary help to those who have much to do with the sufferings of mankind—who have seen men tossing with pain in a hospital, and watched them dying in some poor little garret in a slum—that our Blessed Saviour revealed to us His bodily sufferings; and just as it was not till after the Temptation was over that He felt the hunger which made Him desire food, so it is not until the spiritual trial is over that He is conscious of His bodily thirst; but we who have to see so much physical suffering do thank Him that He did tell us of His thirst; for the first of these short cries was “I thirst.” As the beautiful hymn says:—

“His are the thousand sparkling rills
That from a thousand fountains burst;
And fill with music all the hills—
And yet He saith, ‘I thirst.’”

I suppose that many of us have longed that

we had had a chance to have done something to relieve our Saviour's thirst. We may have envied before now the man who was able to fetch a sponge dipped in vinegar, and just reach it up to His lips to quench His thirst; but the first encouragement from this word is that we have it in our power to do it to-day. He said:—"If ye give a cup of cold water in My name, ye have done it unto Me. . . . Inasmuch as ye did it to the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." And it opens a perfect field of service to many here who perhaps are busy people with little time to spare from their business—a perfect field of service for Jesus Christ in relieving the sufferings of those who suffer. I know of many a busy man with a large business of his own who spends some hours of every Sunday in visiting the hospitals of this great City. I know many who go down every week from the West End of London to sit by and comfort some poor child in East London. I know others who go and sing in workhouses or infirmaries—others who give, even perhaps to the point of unwisdom sometimes, to those who are poorer than themselves. But what this word does point out is that with tact and wisdom and real consideration—not just considering our own feelings, by which we fling, perhaps, a shilling to a beggar, but

with real thought and real consideration—there lies open a field of service in relieving the sufferings of those who suffer. We can put the vinegar to the lips of our Saviour when we soothe some poor sufferer, and put the cup of refreshment to his or her lips, and therefore I would ask those who are conscious that they have done nothing of this sort yet—are they not losing the chance of delightful service to the Saviour in doing something for those who are poorer or sadder than themselves?

But more than that, it is not only a bodily thirst which Jesus had upon the Cross, but a soul-thirst. We do not realize—no, not yet one of us—how Jesus thirsts for us. We find it hard to believe, when we are conscious of how worthless we are, and how very little really our love is worth, how Jesus thirsts for our love; how He longs to have that utter devotion of which we really are capable, and He knows we are capable. And therefore the second thing I would say to you, my brother or sister, to-day is, that He thirsts for you—that He is not satisfied. It is perfectly true that He is not satisfied, even with the love of every one else, if He does not have your love; and that, being full of an infinite compassion, and an infinite power of taking into His pastoral heart every one for

whom He died, He does long for you to-day. Do think of this—you who have, perhaps, not been religious up to now, you who know perfectly well that your daily prayer has been given up, or has become a mere form—you, who although you have been respectable enough in your life, have had nothing like a loving devotion to Christ. Do not you think that you might on Good Friday try and give this devotion to Him? Do not you think that you might give Him something to-day—something which will really refresh Him—by offering Him your life's devotion? It is not sentiment—it is not feeling—but it is the loving devotion of a life which shall be lived out in return for the Cross. There may be some young man here who is wondering what to do with his life, who has been kept back from thinking of being ordained by all kinds of misunderstandings or excuses, or because he is waiting for a call. Here is the call:—"I thirst—I thirst for your devotion. The offer of your service to-day will enable Me to quench the thirst of others. I will send you forth with the water of life into some parish where there are thousands who never pray, and whose souls are thirsting for life, and I will use you to quench their thirst." Is not that worth giving your life for?

Or some woman living a selfish, self-centered

life. It is your devotion that Christ wants ; your devotion—" I thirst for it."

As we kneel down let us—all of us—those of us who may have spent some years' service in the Master's cause—renew our service—offer a more devoted service, and try for the rest of our lives—the years that are left—to quench His thirst.

"Oh love most patient ! give us grace,
Make all our souls athirst for Thee ;
That parched, dry lip, that fading face,
That thirst, were all for me."

THE SIXTH WORD

"It is finished."

AND now we listen to the cry of triumph. If it was pain to listen to that cry of desolation, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" it is a glorious thing to listen, as He throws back His head upon the Cross, and with the cry of triumph says, "It is finished." Think

over the realm of time and eternity, as He looked back to the time when He said, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God ;" all the awful, and by us only half-understood plan of redemption—all that long-detailed carrying-out of the work He set Himself to do when He left heaven—was all over now ; and just like one who had won a great battle at infinite cost and infinite pain, He proclaimed for all time and for all eternity, as the one central thing that would affect the world through all the ages before and after—"It is finished." What was finished ?

First—the perfect and complete Atonement was finished : a satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. How it was done—why that was a satisfaction for the sins of the whole world—the more books we read about the Atonement the more we see the difficulty of explaining. But we have this infinite satisfaction that we are saved, not by any theory of the Atonement, but by the fact of it, and therefore it is a grand thought that when He said, "It is finished," He meant that there was banked up and built and prepared a reservoir in readiness for the sins of the whole world, and that what we have to do as sinners is, with the hand of faith, and by the ordained means, to reach up into this reservoir of mercy and forgiveness, that so the healing streams may

come into our souls. We ought to live a forgiven life—the normal state of a Christian is to have joy and peace in believing—we ought never to go to bed at night unforgiven. Baptism brings us forgiveness as an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace—"Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sin;" but, with most of us who have been baptized in infancy, and have sinned since our baptism, we must confess our sins and believe that forgiveness has been won for us freely—a forgiveness which we could not purchase or work out for ourselves, and that if we are truly penitent there is a pardon, and there is an absolution, as a free gift from Heaven; that while in our Church we have the merciful mother Church's direction, that if we cannot by ourselves receive peace from God, we may go and seek help from another, that so the absolution may be spoken to our own souls individually; yet that the absolution and possibility of pardon has been purchased by Christ, and by no other at all; and, therefore, that the first great blessing of this word, "It is finished," is that there is pardon and forgiveness for the sins of the whole world.

So, secondly, there is the perfect life of obedience finished. Christ had perfectly to obey—"For their sakes I sanctify Myself that they also

may be sanctified through the truth"—in order that in His perfected humanity there might be laid up for us, all the grace that we could possibly want to perfect and sanctify and purify our souls ; and if the first thing we ought to be living is a life of forgiveness, the second is a life of growth in grace. Are you using all the means of grace ? Are you baptized ? If not, why not ? Christ was no formalist, and yet His last command, or one of them, was, "Go into all the world, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Are you confirmed ? If not, why not ? "Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost, for as yet He was fallen upon none of them. Only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." Are you a communicant ? If not, why not ? It is Jesus Himself who says, "Take, eat, this is My body ; drink this, it is My blood." We take Him at His word ; we do not dogmatize about the manner, but if He can say that of it, then there must be a special virtue in the Holy Communion, and it must be an especial and Divinely appointed means of receiving into ourselves the perfected manhood of Jesus Christ, so that we may be refreshed in our inmost souls with the body and blood of Christ.

Is it then to be in vain that He has died ? If

not, resolve as we kneel down to have from that perfected work, which He had finished on the Cross, the two blessings of entire and permanent forgiveness and the fulness of inspiring and transfiguring grace.

THE SEVENTH WORD

“Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.”

AND now, before we kneel, as we shall do, to receive the last sigh as it were of our Saviour, as He commends His soul into the hands of His Father—just as we kneel by the bedside of our dear ones as they surrender their last breath—we have just to ask this question—Are any of us afraid of death? If we are, then with the eye of faith, see what a good death is. There is no fear in it—there is no terror in it—there is simple, calm trust in it. There is nothing in itself to fear in the spirit passing to the Father of spirits. If the life has been what it ought to be—if the life is the Three Hours’ life—if there is a forgiving spirit—if there is contrition and courage as in the penitent thief—if the home

life is loving and considerate—if there is patience through the darkness—if there is helpfulness to others' wants, as humanity thirsts—if it is a sacramental life in communion with the perfected life of Jesus Christ—then we need not be afraid to die. “Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.” May the death—and some of us are practically sure to die before next Good Friday—may the death of all of us be the death of Jesus Christ!

And that death let us watch reverently on our knees.

THE END.

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